

#### FIRST SOVIET EXPERIMENT

of the committee. The movement expanded to Mazanderan, Astarabad, and other Caspian regions. The Jangalis managed to capture a few Britons, among them Captain Noel, an intelligence officer who was on his way back from Baku, as well as the British Consul in Resht, MacLaren, and the manager of the British bank there, Oak-shot. The latter two were captured in a reprisal for the arrest by the British of the Iranian socialist leader Suleiman Mirza, who had been sent to London. All these men were kept as hostages.

Kuchik Khan's movement was financed by extorting ransom from Gilan landowners. "We widely practiced the system of taking hostages," wrote Ekhsanulla Khan in his memoirs.<sup>9</sup> "Taking any wealthy squire, feudal lord or entrepreneur, we would demand the sum of five thousand to one hundred thousand tomans under the threat of putting them in jail. If the demand sum was not paid, we deported the debtor till he would pay us." The Jangalis established contact with the Enzeli Revolutionary Committee, which had been created by the soldiers and sailors of the demoralized Russian troops who throughout 1918 were being evacuated from Iran. In July, 1918, British troops under General Dunsterville passed through Gilan on their way to Enzeli and Baku, yet, except for a skirmish at the Menjil Defile northwest of Teheran, no major battle took place between them and the rebels. This passage of troops, which manifested British strength and determination to prevent the Bolsheviks from seizing Baku, brought confusion to the members of Kuchik Khan's committee. Some of them insisted that peace should be made with the British. As a result of their pressure and over the

opposition of  
 Ekhsanulla Khan, in August, 1918, an agreement was  
 made between  
 Kuchik Khan and the British by which the latter  
 recognized his  
 authority in Gilan and even his right to appoint the  
 governor of  
 Resht. In return, Kuchik promised to suspend  
 hostilities against the  
 British, to expel his German and Turkish military  
 instructors, and  
 to release Captain Noel. (Consul MacLaren and Mr.  
 Oakshot had  
 been released earlier.) This deal was very convenient  
 for the British  
 because it made safe their line of communications  
 between Mesopo-  
 tamia and the Caspian. Moreover, the more  
 conservative members of

«R. Abikh, "Natsionalnoye i Revolyutsionnoye  
 Dvizheniye v Persii" (Vospomi-  
 naniya Ekhsan-Ully-Khana)," *Novy Vostok*,  
 XXIX, 106.